

Cheaters Never Win!

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In introducing this second article in the trilogy, 'winning at all costs...is not winning at all' I have to state that there is no easy way to say this; so please excuse me while I set aside my renowned Scottish tact and diplomacysome competitors have been technically non-compliant..... or as I prefer to call it..... cheating!

There I said it! But you already knew that didn't you?

Cheating in karting has always been the 'elephant in the room', (*an issue that nobody wants to acknowledge or tackle*) but last season, RMC series champion Maurits Knopjes was also driven to voice his displeasure online about the alleged level of cheating in karting today. And let's face it, Maurits was spot on.

Now at the same time, it's important to be clear that just because a driver is fast does not mean they are cheating. As a whole, people who race at the front of the pack, typically have well prepared karts and are talented drivers who have worked hard to get there.

Nevertheless, 'bending the rules' and motorsport seem to have gone hand in hand for over 60 years, but unlike Formula 1, where it can perhaps be argued that given the technical complexity of the cars and the regulations that F1's car designers and race engineers are simply pushing the boundaries of the technical regulations to the extreme, exploring grey areas, loopholes and chinks in the FIA's regulatory armour, there can be no such defence in karting where grey areas are rare and black and white prevails.

OK, so you might make a genuine mistake, accidentally miscalculate and end up underweight on the scales, but you certainly don't over lubricate a clutch, loosen off the top of a carburettor, use 'trick' carbs or fuel or apply 'tyre softening' chemicals in a legitimate attempt to explore the boundaries of the regulations, you do it to deliberately gain an unfair advantage over the competition.... YOU DO IT TO CHEAT.

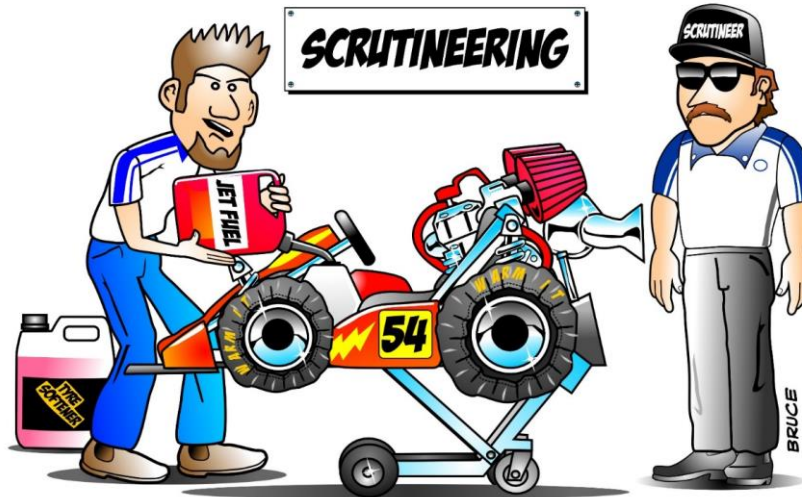
I suppose it may be human nature for some teams, engineers and drivers to cheat but what makes cheating so tempting for some people I will never understand. Perhaps it's when you get to the point in your racing career where your next goal is to start winning races, and you can't or maybe its frustration when you can't beat your arch opponent on track fairly and squarely or you think that he might be cheating to beat you. Throughout the years I have heard competitors in all forms of motorsport try to attempt to rationalise cheating, "It's not performance enhancing, it just improves reliability" or, "everyone else is at it, so why should I be left behind?" being a typically feeble defence.



The temptation to cheat and/or the lack of consequences for being caught also creates a personal moral dilemma – 'should I cheat or not', which usually correlates with 'if I cheat what are the chances I can get away with it?' While some people may get away with cheating for a while, it WILL catch up to them eventually.

So, theory and morals aside, what can the RMC organisers and officials do to stamp out cheating?

One of the questions posed in the 2013 / 14 RMC end of season survey was intended to reveal the level of competitor's satisfaction with the scrutineering process and the organiser's ability to identify technical infringements and both the scoring and comments indicated that despite all our best efforts, there was a lack of confidence in the identification of non-compliances. There is certainly room for improvement.



ITS NOT CHEATING, WE'RE JUST "EXPLORING THE BOUNDARIES OF THE REGULATIONS"

In my mind we need:

- **More Scrutineers**

Let's face reality, the RMC in the UAE has a dire shortage of race officials across all disciplines and we currently only have one (very valuable) Scrutineer and as diligent as Lazarin and his assistants are, they simply cannot hope to be in Parc Ferme, trackside and everywhere else in the paddock at the same time.

All efforts to recruit additional scrutineers locally have failed, so what are our options?

Well, given that our series runs in the European winter 'off season' the organisers might have a reasonable chance of enlisting a 'fly in' scrutineer from the UK, but that comes with a price, but are you as competitors prepared to pay that price? (My rough order of magnitude estimate is that a 'fly in' Scrutineer would cost each competitor an additional 150 AED on their entry fee, per event)....your call

- **More time for technical inspections**

Trying to meticulously inspect 60+ karts in a couple of hours prior to practice is a tall order for even the most proficient of scrutineering teams, never mind for a single individual, just do the math, let's assume a scrutineering session of 120 minutes and 60 karts = 2 MINUTES PER KART!

Do we really expect Lazarin to be able to perform his detective work and uncover 'technical non-compliances' in just 2 minutes, so is the answer to scrutineer the majority of the karts the evening before to relieve the pressure on race day scrutineering?

It can of course be argued that scrutineering a kart the



evening before simply plays into the hands of the cheats by allowing them to perform their dastardly demon tweaks overnight and I have to accept that argument, but I would far rather give each competitor's machine a more thorough inspection instead of the cursory check that time pressures force upon us now on race day.

- **Spot checks**

Last season the organisers and the ASN took the initiative to conduct some random checks during the races and with some 'success' too, uncovering some dubious technical modifications. We need more of these spot checks at each and every event. But again we need more officials.

- **Improving the technical capabilities of UAE Scrutineers**

As great and as cosmopolitan as the UAE RMC series is, it is nevertheless a very geographically insular series, in that we only have 12 events over 6 months per year with an average of 60-70 competitors per event.

This only offers a fairly narrow window of activity for the Scrutineer and the rest of us officials to practice our skills. Acquiring up to date knowledge here is also a challenge, where gleaning the latest attempts at innovative technical non-compliance (cheating!) across the globe relies largely on word of mouth information being slowly filtered down to the RMC.

Compare this to the UK or elsewhere, where firstly, there will be more officials per event and where an official will commonly officiate at double that number of events annually over a 9 month season. (For example in my last full season in Australia I officiated on 52 event days).

Officials overseas are also exposed to a far larger 'pool' of competitors and arguably officiate at a higher, more intense standard of competition.

Factor in to this the ability of officials to both informally network and formally exchange information with other officials, attend MSA seminars, receive on-going training and official advisories and bulletins and hopefully you will understand the constraints in which we all volunteer our services, and scrutineering is a prime example.

While the presence of 'fly in' Scrutineers will provide training opportunities and a conduit for information, there remains further opportunities to optimise both the training and the acquisition of knowledge for officials in the UAE, perhaps formally with the MSA in the UK or CAMS in Australia.

Again, all this is perfectly achievable, but at a cost... a cost that I believe that the RMC organisers simply cannot afford with their current customer base.

- **Consequences.....Serious Consequences!**

There needs to be far tougher consequences for cheaters that are caught.

As the series Clerk of the Course, that means enforcing a zero tolerance policy to cheating on or off the track, and I will be urging my Steward colleagues to apply severe punishments including long suspensions and revoking licences.

I would also like to see the organisers adopting a 'name and shame' policy for anybody found to be deliberately cheating. Shame is a toxic emotion. It seems impossible to me that teams, engineers, drivers and parents who blatantly cheat will not at some point be consumed with shame anyway on a conscious or subconscious level for the rest of their life, but let's name them and accelerate the process for them. The shame associated with cheating is the price cheaters pay, and why cheaters never really win — even if they're never caught.

Given the price that Lance Armstrong will pay for the rest of his life, would he now rather be remembered for the short term glory of seven titles gained through blatant cheating or instead be remembered as having fairly achieved seven *Tour de France* podiums or even 'just' top ten places?

Ultimately, sportsmanship in motorsport should strive to be the same as it is in other sports, it should be about building mindset, character, resilience and close-open and fair competition. It is not about how many trophies you 'win'. It really is about how you 'drive the race' and what you have learned through the process. If you cheat in sport or life you are ultimately sabotaging yourself and making yourself less of a viable competitor.

But again, if one or more of your competitors are technically non-compliant and you want to remain competitive what are you supposed to do? If you do believe that someone is cheating – protest them using the process the organisers have in place...and leave the rest to the officials!



This is a paradox we all have to navigate in sport and in life. Yes, you want to be your absolute best and to try your hardest to win and to be thrilled if you are victorious....But you cannot cheat to win on an ethical and karmic level.

Let us also focus on the message that cheating sends to the youngsters in our sport, we all have a clear duty within the sport to set an example to the junior drivers. From a very young age our children are taught that if they want to 'succeed' in life that they have to think and act with absolute integrity in just about every challenge they face.

If you ever feel pressured to even think about cheating, ask yourself—would you rather be remembered for winning a trophy and then being caught, perhaps only being remembered thereafter as a cheat or instead be revered for a storming and talented drive to second third or whatever place you achieve under fair and equitable circumstances.

As one endurance athlete puts it “Karma is a boomerang..... I believe that the bad karma and ill-will of being a cheater has the power to eat you up from the inside out and ultimately destroy you and the long-term shame and anxiety of cheating will ultimately negate the short-term gains of victory”.

So, be a good sport and compete fairly on and off the track! It will end up rewarding you in the long run and will surely make you a better competitor.

People who play by the rules will ultimately prevail.